

REMARKS

Status of the Claims

Claims 1, 4-21 and 26 are pending in this application, the independent claims being claims 1, 8, 21 and 26. By this Amendment, claims 2, 3, 22-25 and 27 are canceled, and claims 1, 4-7, 21 and 26 are amended.

Summary of the Official Action

In the Official Action, the prior Restriction Requirement was made final and claims 22-25 were withdrawn from consideration in the present application. Claims 4 and 5 were objected to under 37 C.F.R. 1.75(a), as lacking proper antecedent basis for the term "the proportions." Claims 1, 21 and 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b), as anticipated by either U.S. Patent No. 6,353,790 (Tsuzuki) or U.S. Patent No. 4,432,201 (Hawes), claim 2 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b), as anticipated by the Hawes '201 patent, and claims 17-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b), as anticipated by the Tsuzuki '790 patent.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection and rejections respectfully are requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Allowable Subject Matter

Initially, Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication that the application contains allowable subject matter, and that claims 3-16 and 27 are allowable over the prior art.

Claim Amendments

The objection to and rejections of the claims respectfully are traversed. Nevertheless, without conceding the propriety of the objection and rejections, claims 2, 3, 22-25 and 27 have been canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein, and claims 1, 4-7, 21 and 26 have been amended to each incorporate subject matter indicated as allowable, as set forth below.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite the features of allowed claim 3, including the features of intervening dependent claim 2, and claims 2 and 3 have been canceled in lieu thereof. Accordingly, Applicant submits that claim 1 is allowable and in condition for allowance.

Claims 4-7 have been amended to depend from claim 1, and are believed to be allowable for the same reasons. Moreover, since amended claim 1 recites the features of original dependent claim 3, Applicants submit that the formal objection to claims 4 and 5 is moot.

Claim 8 has been re-written in independent form, as suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, Applicant submits that claim 8 is allowable and in condition for allowance.

Claims 9-16 depend from claim 8, and are believed to remain allowable and in condition for allowance.

Claims 17-20 depend from claim 1, and are believed allowable for the same reasons.

Independent claim 21 has been amended to recite allowable features of original claim 2 and 3, and is believed allowable for the same reasons as claim 1.

Non-elected claims 22-25, which were withdrawn from consideration in the present application pursuant to the prior Restriction Requirement, have been canceled herein without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Applicant reserves the right to file one or more divisional applications directed to the subject matter of canceled claims 22-25.

Independent claim 26 has been amended to recited allowable features of original dependent claim 27, and claim 27 has been canceled in lieu thereof. Accordingly, Applicant submits that claim 26 is allowable and in condition for allowance.

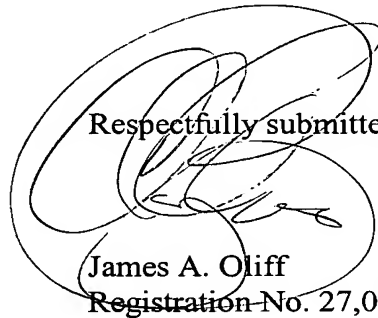
Support for the amendments may be found in the original application, e.g., in the original claims. No new matter has been added.

For the above reasons, Applicant submits that claims 1, 4-21 and 26 are allowable over the prior art and in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

Applicant believes that the present Amendment is responsive to each of the points raised by the Examiner in the Official Action, and submits that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration of the claims and passage to issue at the Examiner's earliest convenience earnestly are solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.


Respectfully submitted,
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